

McCollum Event – Official Transcript

Tim R. McDonald – January 30, 2006

Hello, my name is Tim McDonald, and I am President of the Minnesota Association of Private College Students. I attend Hamline University in St Paul. I've said this before and I'll assert it again: the generation who benefited from highly subsidized, affordable college is pulling up the ladder and making students of our generation debt-finance not only our own educations, but their own deficit spending. It is bad policy.

Yes, it is fair to ask, and I expect, young adults to pull themselves up by their bootstraps and work to earn their education. But we must ask ourselves—at what point do those bootstraps begin to break at the expense of our nation's future? When does the responsibility of EARNING one's education begin to BURDEN their potential?

Recently the Republicans in congress cut billions of dollars out from underneath the low- to middle-class students who are working to build the future of America. Tomorrow President Bush will speak to the state of the union. He will hail the recent efforts of congress to find money by cutting the level of investment we put into our students. To President Bush, as he has been quoted saying recently, the new system “works better.”

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For the college students of Minnesota this is not a partisan issue, it is not a matter to be lost in political spin—it is about the vitality of our educational system and our national well-being.

It is about honesty—having the integrity to stand up and tell our students the straight truth. Congress must have the courage and foresight to invest without immediate return. In the recent reauthorization of the Higher Ed Act, when human economic, intellectual and social capital was at stake, they failed to rise to the standards of great nation.

College tuition is at an unprecedented high and the response from government on all levels has been unacceptable. Last month a misguided city council member of St Paul proposed charging all college students a \$25 USER FEE to attend a college or university within the city. Now, nearly all the students at these institutions come from outside of St Paul. This would be a USER FEE for students to come live and work in local neighborhoods. A USER FEE to bring new money to area businesses. A USER FEE to pay rent to local landlords, a USER FEE to volunteer at area schools and a USER FEE to have an internship at the state capital.

There is a fundamental disconnect taking place with some of our elected leaders that treats education as an expense and not a necessity. It's occurring at all levels of government, from municipalities the highest individuals. A new vision must be adopted for the future of America—one focused on creating access for students so that they can get an education that will help to bolster our competitiveness amongst pressing global competition.

As President Bush speaks tomorrow night it is important for the people of Minnesota to know the truth behind the words. Education is the means in which we will embrace global competition and remain a world leader throughout the coming years. As it stands now, the President and Republican members of Congress are failing to provide the vision and support required to ensure the standard of education for a truly great society.